

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



624 NE Washington St
Lewistown, MT 59457

May 20, 1996

Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Helena 59620
Director's Office, Dept. of Health and Environmental Sciences
Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Resource Assessment
Fisheries Division
Parks Division
Regional Supervisors

State Library

Jim Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center
P.O. Box 1184, Helena, Montana 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT
59624

George Ochenski, Government Affairs and Consulting
P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624

Tony Jewett, Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT
59624

Ladies and Gentlemen:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the
Cutler property acquisition and development at Big Spring Creek
near Brewery Flats Fishing Access Site, Lewistown, Montana.

The scope of the proposed project has been determined to be
sufficient to initiate the H.B. 495 (Section 23-1-110, MCA) process.
Both the Montana Environmental Policy Act and H.B. 495 report
considerations are included in the following document. The
specific items required in H.B. 495 are identified on the EA
checklist and addressed in the comments of those respective
sections.

Any questions or comments on this project should be addressed
to the undersigned by July 1, 1996.

Sincerely:

Anne Tews
A.T.

Anne Tews
Fisheries Division
MFWP
(406) 538-4658

Ferguson

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
P.O. Box 200701
1420 East Sixth Avenue, Helena MT 59620-0701

Division/Bureau Fisheries Division

Project or Application Cutler property; annex to Brewery Flats Fishing Access Site

Description of Project This site has been selected by the department as a needed addition to the Fishing Access Site system. This site is intended to accommodate anglers and provide floating access to Big Spring Creek

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

					Comments on
Major Moderate Minor None Unknown					attached pages
1.	Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats			X	
2.	Water quality, quantity and distribution			X	
3.	Geology & soil quality, stability and moisture			X	
4.	Vegetation cover, quantity and quality			X	
5.	Aesthetics			X	HB 495
6.	Air Quality			X	
7.	Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X	HB 495 Site capacity
8.	Demands on environmental resources of land, water air and energy			X	
9.	Historical and archaeological sites			X	HB 495

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Major Moderate Minor None Unknown Comments on attached pages

1.	Social structures and mores			X		
2.	Cultural uniqueness and diversity			X		
3.	Local and state tax base and tax revenue			X		
4.	Agricultural or industrial production			X		
5.	Human health			X		
6.	Quantity and distribution of community and personal income			X		HB 495 Tourism
7.	Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities		X			X
8.	Quantity and distribution of employment			X		
9.	Distribution & density of population & housing			X		
10.	Demands for government services		X			HB 495 Maintenance
11.	Industrial and commercial activity			X		HB 495 Tourism
12.	Demands for energy			X		
13.	Locally adopted environmental plans and goals			X		
14.	Transportation networks and traffic flows			X		
15.	Site Specific Modification System Wide			X		HB 495
Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction						
Individual or groups contributing to this EA						
Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.						

PER prepared by Anne Tews

Date May 6, 1996

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

ACQUISITION OF A FISHING ACCESS SITE ON BIG SPRING CREEK IN LEWISTOWN MONTANA

Prepared by
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
April 12, 1996

General Purpose: The 1977 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-605 which directs the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to acquire, develop and operate a system of fishing accesses. The legislation established an earmarked funding account to ensure that this function would be accomplished. Acquisition and development of this site at Lewistown will continue to provide access to Big Spring Creek for anglers and other recreational users.

I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

A. Location of the Property

The proposed Fishing Access Site is located on 0.171 acres of property in Township 15 North, Range 18 East, Section 23 (Fergus County) at a cost of \$550. This property is located adjacent to Ash Street in Lewistown Montana. See Appendix A for the exact site survey and Appendix B for the general area map.

If this site is acquired it would ensure that public access would continue at the site. It is a traditional public access on a railroad right of way. The right-of-way has been purchased by a group of individuals, so if this site is not purchased by FWP, public access may be lost.

B. Need for the Action

The total estimated fishing pressure in Montana for 1993 was 2,300,763 angler days. In 1995 fishing Access Site program had 312 sites distributed across the state in all major drainages. This program is an essential component of fisheries management in Montana because a large percentage of the angler use is achieved through these sites.

The estimated fishing pressure on Big Spring Creek was 12,360 angler days in 1993.

The Department operates Fishing Access Sites at Brewery Flats (immediately upstream) and at Carroll Trail (approximately 4 miles downstream). The proposed Fishing Access Site would be an annex to the Brewery Flats site and provides a historical access for anglers and floaters.

C. Scope of Acquisition and Development

Acquisition of the 0.171 acres of property adjacent to Big Spring Creek is being proposed for incorporation into the Department's Fishing Access Site program. Acquisition of this property is intended to provide public access and accommodate angler use of Big Spring Creek. This action will eventually require site protection (fencing) and signing. The current entrance road and parking area should be adequate for intended use, but may need to be graveled in the future. This action is minor and not an undertaking.

II. IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

Please review the attached checklist. Since the proposed acquisition is intended for the sole purpose of providing a developed angler access to the river, the

impacts of currently planned development are included in the Environmental Assessment.

A. **Impacts to the Physical Environment**

5. **Aesthetics**

H.B. 495 requires consideration of the site's capacity for development. Site aesthetics will not be appreciably damaged by this project, since only site fencing and perhaps graveling of the parking lot are the only planned improvements.

9. **Historical and Archeological Sites**

This project is very minor and is not an undertaking. Historical and archeological sites will not be impacted with the amount of development planned at this time.

B. **Impacts on the Human Environment**

6. **Quantity and Distribution of Community and Personal Income -- H.B. 495 Requirement - Tourism**

See the section below entitled, "Commercial Activity."

7. **Access to and Quality of Recreational Activities.**

Activities at this traditional access may be restricted if the site is not purchased by Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

10. **Demands on Government Services -- H.B 495 Requirement - Long Range Maintenance of the Improvements.**

This site is immediately adjacent to the existing maintained Brewery Flats Fishing Access Site. Maintenance for litter removal and weed control should not exceed \$200 annually.

11. **Commercial Activity -- H. B. 495 Requirement - Impact on Tourism**

This acquisition and construction project proposal should maintain the site aesthetics and will have negligible impacts on the local economy or human distribution. This project will simply make river access more convenient for the angling public. The site project is not large enough to constitute a major attraction.

15. **H.B. 495 Requirement - Describe how this project relates to the entire Fishing Access Site system, as a whole.**

This project is minimal in scope and is therefore within the conservative intent of the entire system. There is nothing being proposed at this site that could be interpreted as a divergence from past management.

Strategic Planning accomplished by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks during 1992 has set five goals. Goal B is to "Provide increased opportunities for public enjoyment of fish, wildlife and parks resources while maintaining our commitment to improve landowner-sportsperson relations." The Fishing Access Site project is intended to accomplish this goal of providing expanded opportunity.

III. **Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternative**

1) **The "No Action" Alternative**

If the Cutler property is not acquired the following situations are likely to occur.

- the recreational use level of this reach of river may be reduced if this traditional public access is closed off by a new land owner.
- Access to this point of Big Spring Creek will be dependent upon private landowners and could be closed at any time.
- possible decline in angler and floater use in historical areas, if this traditional access is closed to the public.

2) The Proposed Alternative

The Cutler Site acquisition is an effort to provide site facilities at a responsible management level. The project will result in the following.

- continued use a traditional access which may be closed off due to transfer of railroad lands.
- a responsible level of management of the site, including noxious weed and litter management.
- Angler and floater use at historical levels.

IV. Environmental Assessment Conclusions Section

- 1) Is an EIS required? No

This review has clearly demonstrated that the impacts associated with this project are not significant. The net result of the proposed action is to maintain existing positive factors to the human and physical environment.

- 2) Describe the level of public involvement. H.B. 495 requirements of statewide advertising do not pertain to acquisitions.

Legal notices will be placed in the Lewistown newspaper, the Great Falls Tribune, and the Helena Independent Record.

- 3) Duration of comment will extend to July 1, 1996.

- 4) Name, Title address and phone number of Person Responsible for Preparing the EA Document

Anne Tews
Fisheries Biologist
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
624 NE Washington Street
Lewistown, MT 59457 (406) 538-4658